

INVESTIGATION INTO PARENTS' PARTICIPATION IN THEIR CHILDREN'S FORMAL EDUCATION IN NINE YEAR BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS (9YBE) IN RWANDA

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the performance of students is viewed as an outcome generated by various dynamics where the family and the school can be taken as the cornerstone of efficacious education. This is the real purpose that pushed the researcher to bring an investigation into the parents' participation in their children's formal education in Nine Year Basic Education schools (9YBE) in Rwanda. The study was conducted at Groupe Scolaire Cyabagarura in Musanze district where the poor performance of students in the Ordinary Level Exam of 2011 and other district tests were pointed at despite the great number of trained teachers in education found at the school being cited. This research involved various respondents including parents and their children as well as teachers in a bid to finding the root causes of the poor performance of these students. Given the nature of this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were relied on so that the data from the involved and sampled informants could be analyzed effectively. To get this sample from each category, the researcher used the stratified systematic random sampling method. He also used the interview guide, questionnaires, observation and documentation as the approaches to deeply explore the research problem. With the help of the investigation made, our findings indicated poor parents' participation in helping their children to perform well at school as all our results from table 1 to 6 showcased. With the view of all this research purpose, we drew the attention to various concerned people in education setting that 9YBE program and policy cannot be attained without any active collaboration of parents for encouraging and reminding their children to revise and do the school activities assigned to them by their teachers. Schools have to work hand in hand with teachers and parents for the sake of the students' good performance.

Keywords: : Investigation, parents, participation, formal education, Nine Year Basic Education (9YBE)

1. INTRODUCTION

In the nature of the world, most of living things take care for their offspring from the birth to the adulthood. On the side of human being in particular, the care giving process for the children is known as education. Education as a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges to improve knowledge and develop skills (Oxford advanced learner's Dictionary: 2010) was traditionally delivered by parents and communities around in the informal education. Currently, the struggle to the globalization, technological advances, democratic issues, and among other today's challenges of the world require a skillful and better prepared citizen than in the past. It is in this regard, the international and national plans, like the internationally-agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), stress the importance of the education by demanding countries to achieve Education For All by the year 2015 as not only informal education but also formal education (UNESCO: 2006), hence today's children education is centered to parents and teachers as the main educators (Michigan Department of Education: 2001). This implies that if parents worked hand in hand with teachers they would be able to make their children perform well.

However, by the time the formal education was introduced in the education, some parents did not want to send their children to school not only that they do not take keen interest to schooling but also that schooling was expansive. In addition, the fact that schools were not enough to all school-aged children, the child should greatly compete to have access to the schooling, especially in secondary and higher learning institutions.

Thus, the first concern of education stakeholders was to increase the school enrolment in formal education. By the year 2004, statistics shows that regarding the concern of enrolment, the enrolment was at 86% in primary in the Worldwide (UNESCO: ibid).

However, the considerable increase of school enrolment made in last decades didn't sometimes provide quality education due to that many parents whose children attend schools have in their mind that the education of their children is the sole responsibility of schools (Epstein, et al: 2002).

After 1994, the government of Rwanda revealed its aspirations by the year 2020, hence Rwanda vision 2020. Moreover, the vision 2020 is expected to be scored through building knowledge based economy or society. In this regard, Nine year-basic Education Program was introduced in Rwandan education system to spread the knowledge to all Rwandans. This program that started with the school year of 2009 was attained through the collaboration of local authorities with all Rwandans in building new classes country wide (MINEDUC: 2010)

As the statistics shows, the results from the above parent and local authorities efforts is the significant increase of the access to the schooling in basic education: *the completion of primary school has climbed from 52% in 2007 to 75% in 2009, and the promotion from primary to secondary, has jumped from 53% in 2007 to 95% in 2009* (Rwanda focus: on line)

The chief factors driving rapid increase in enrolment in Rwanda were, beside the abolition of fees in primary and ordinary levels, the massive rooms built in each and every countryside area and the other programs such as gender equality, the government's efforts against child laborer and the promotion of special need education in Rwanda (MIGEPROF: 2011)

In Rwanda, the promotion of education was taken as a powerful instrument for transforming Rwanda's economy into a middle income country (MINECOFIN: 2000). It is in this regard the government of Rwanda has set up 9YBE Schools across the country and trained qualified teachers through different colleges of education to handle the great number of students in one room as well as helping them to perform well in their scheduled lessons.

Students are of different families that some are of low income level while others are of high income level. Both statuses can positively affect the performance of children from them. Students from low income level can be motivated by this status to strive harder and do their very best in school for they believe that education is the key to good life later. Students, who live in more fluent families, have higher educational aspiration and expectations. The stability of their family and the availability of reading materials etc. have a great influence on their achievement. Thus, both rich and poor families can create a climate that foster learning. According to White (1982) "even though family background does have a strong relationship to achievement, it may be how parents rear their children...and not the parents' occupation, income, or education that really make the difference"

Based on how some parents are reluctant to help their children learn successfully while at home by saying that students' learning and performance are mainly the tasks of their school teachers, this paper was only written with the aims of investigating the parents' participation in their children' formal education in nine year basic education, particularly at G. S Cyabagarura. This school was picked when the poor performance of students in national exams of 2011 for Ordinary Level and the test given by the district in the first tem of 2012 was so critical despite the trained and qualified teachers in education the school had. So, the investigations had to take place so as to verify whether the parental participation in helping and making a follow-up of their children's learning and performance while at school and at home are good rather than thinking that the school or teachers are the only people who should take care of the learning and performance of their children. Therefore different relevant research approaches will intervene for collecting data from the sampled participants for making this study find out and prove the root causes of the above students' poor performance in Musanze district.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1. Study Design

The study originated from a need to investigate the real causes of poor performance of students from one of the

Nine Year basic education schools of Musanze district as its name was identified above. The truth to tell, the study was investigated at GS Cyabagarura in 2012. The school is located in Musanze sector, Musanze district in Rwanda. In the present study, qualitative and quantitative methods were both used so that the parents, students and teachers should give the information and statistics regarding the poor performance of students from the above school.

Both girls and boys students from level one to level three were 455 in total which is also equal to the number of their parents and 16 teachers of these students. Taking into consideration of the target population of this study, the summation has given the number of 926 individuals. With reference to JAVEAU (1985) where he states that the confidence given by information on sample in function of population, the sample must represent 20% of the population. That is the reason why the formula was used below:

$$n_i = \frac{Nx20}{100}$$

Where N= Population of study

n_i= sample representation

The use of this formula has permitted the following calculation:

$$n_i = \frac{455 \times 20}{100} = 91$$

By the application of the formula the researcher found n=91, that is to say, the number of students taken in the sample from target population equals 91. Moreover, the researcher took the same number of parents and 16 teachers to be selected as sample. This implies that the whole sample size was 198 individuals.

2.2. Instruments of Data Collection

The research used the stratified systematic random sampling technique as a reliable technique for obtaining a fair great degree of representativeness and decreasing the probable sampling error. On the side of parents, the researcher started by the family he knew. Thereafter, this family showed the researcher the other neighboring family. The researcher proceeded in this way until he reached 91 families equivalent to 91 parents because it was designed that one available parent in each family would be selected to respond to the questions in questionnaire or interview guide. The researcher also took all teachers (16 teachers) to include them in the sample.

As the research needed to cater for the capacity of its respondents with different skills and knowledge background, the researcher used questionnaires, interview schedules, classroom observation and documentation. As far as the interview is concerned, the interview guide was designed to collect primary data. This interview guide was composed with 12 questions. 10 questions were closed while 2 were open-ended. The interview was given to 40 parents who were not able to read and respond to the questionnaire. This implies that parents themselves had to choose between responding to the questionnaire and being interviewed depending on their level of literacy. The interview guide and the questionnaire reserved to parents were similar in questions. They were straight forward brief and simple in order to minimize the apathy among respondents. In addition, the questions in interview were translated in Kinyarwanda for the illiterate who could not understand the English language. Consequently all questions were answered.

Concerning the documentation, the researcher collected the secondary data from lists of proclamation of results ending the school year 2012. In addition the secondary data were collected from O-level school results 2011 of national examinations for students who completed senior three in 2011. The researcher also used questionnaires to get the primary data. Three questionnaires were used: the first was reserved to 91 students taken as sample, the second to their 16 teachers, and the third to parents who were able to read and respond to questions. The questionnaire of students was composed of 19 questions. They include 14 closed questions and 5 open questions. The questionnaire of teachers was composed of 5 closed questions depending on information needed from them. As mentioned above in the questionnaire of parents and the interview guide were similar in questions. The questionnaire of parents was answered by 51 parents who are able to read and answer the questions. In all questionnaires, questions were translated in Kinyarwanda to minimize any misinterpretations

that might rise. In addition to that, the investigation made by the researcher through classroom observations, it was targeted to spotlight how the teaching and learning activities are practically performed by both teachers and students. Thus, this collection data would indicate the researcher some facts regarding the poor performance of GS Cyabagarura students especially in the ordinary level.

2.3. Procedure and ethical consideration

After reading some rules and regulations about conducting a research and the privacy of the informants, we could not go to GS Cyabagarura to give interviews or distribute questions as one of data instruments to gather all regarding our research problem, the Headmaster of the above school received our questionnaires and interviews checklist and gave us permission to carry on the research data collection from students, parents and teachers. These respondents were shown that approval from the school Headmaster so that they can help us get data related to the parent's participation in their children formal education in 9YBE. Classroom observation, questionnaires and interviews help us to gather all data easily and we also promised all participants much privacy to their data based on the Leedy and Ormrod (2005) where informants consent to respond to the questions from the researcher and honesty with professional colleagues and protection from harm. So, those who were able to answer the research questions from questionnaire returned all questionnaires distributed to them.

3. RESULTS INTERPRETATION

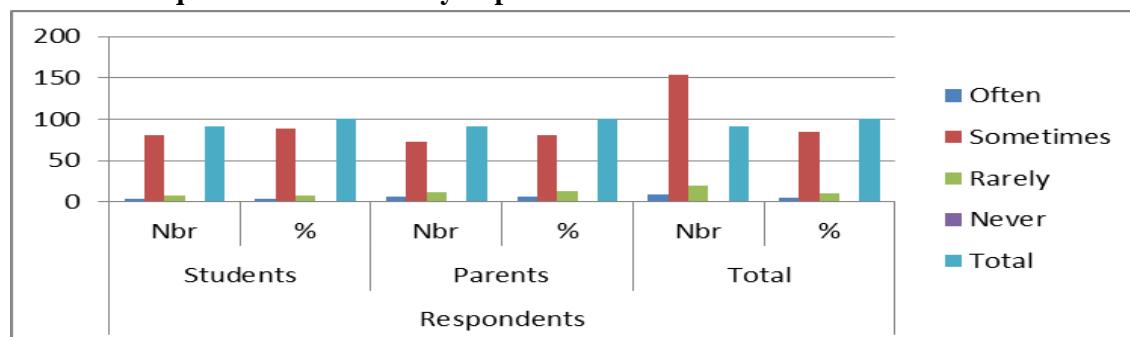
The research firstly brings out the information about the gaps found in the ways parents of Cyabagarura students participate in their children's formal education; Secondly, the information about the level at which parents participation affects students' performance and lastly suggested measures to improve parent participation in formal education at G S Cyabagarura.

The first objective of this study was to highlight the gaps in the participation of parents in their children's formal education at G.S Cyabagarura. Therefore, findings are drawn from all respondents (students, parents and teachers) who highlighted those gaps while responding to the questions in questionnaires and in interview guide as well. The gaps are classified into the following categories: the time parents devote to their children, initiatives of parents to remind their children to do school activities, assistance in school activities parents provide to their children, the level at which parents provide for their children basic school equipment, awareness of parents about the missing equipment, the frequencies of visits parents pay to their children at school to monitor them, the talks between teachers and parents about their children's formal education, the responsiveness of parents to the school appointments, and the motivation of parents to help their children.

3.1. Unavailability of parents at home

Parents of day students are expected to fulfill the responsibilities that the school would fulfill after class if the students were boarding. Thus, to get information about parents' availability at home the researcher asked to the students the following question: "How often are your parents at home after class?" the same question was also asked to parents in this way "how often are you at home after class?"

Chart 1: Frequencies of availability of parents at home after class.



Source: primary data, November 2012

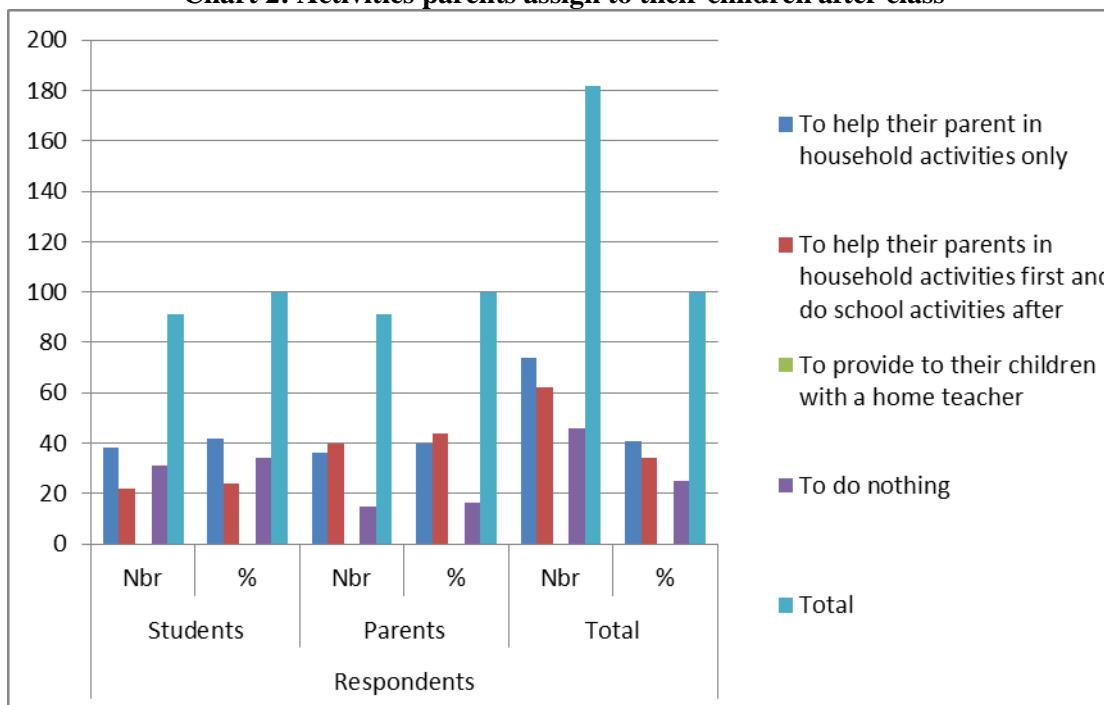
In his research, Brown (1989) found that many parents agree with the idea that a major impediment to becoming

involved is lack of time. Likewise, from the chart above parents have little time to devote to their children's formal education at G.S Cyabagarura. 154 of the total number of both parents and students corresponding to 84.6% confirm that parents are sometimes available; 19 corresponding to 10.5% confirm that parents are rarely available and 9 corresponding to 4.9% stated that parents are often available. This implies that parents are busy in something else rather than the schooling of their children.

3.2. Lack of parents' interest in school activities of their children

The researcher got information on parents' interest in their children's school activities by centering the research attention on the activities parents assign to their children after class and on parents' initiatives in reminding their children to do school activities. Therefore, the following chart shows the findings the researcher got after asking to students the following question: "Being at home or not which activities do your parents assign you after class? The same question was also asked to parents in this way "what does your child in 9YBE do after class?

Chart 2: Activities parents assign to their children after class



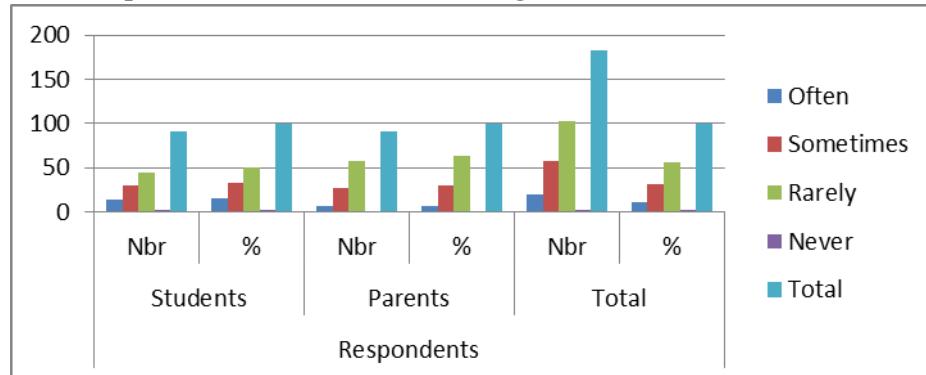
Source: primary data, November 2012

The chart above shows that both students and parents confirm that a great number of parents assign their children what to do. However, on one hand, most of parents assign household activities to their children. 74 of the total number of both questioned parents and students corresponding to 40.7% responded that parents ask their children to help them in household activities only. In addition, 62 corresponding to 34.1% responded that parents ask their children to help them in households first and do their school activities after. On the other hand, 46 corresponding to 25.2% confirm that some parents assign nothing to their children after class.

According to what parents assign to their children, the school activities are not given their due value. This point is confirmed with the fact that 0 respondents corresponding to 0% of the total number of all students and parents confirm that parents do nothing to provide a home teacher for their children. Therefore, by analyzing these findings, it is clear that both parents and students do not prioritize school issues. However, Stienberg (1996) states that school achievement is more dependent on the ways students structure their lives and on the priorities they and their parents hold than it is on the particular school students attend.

The chart below also focuses on the parents' interest in school activities of their children. It shows the findings got after asking to students the following question "how often do your parents remind you to do school

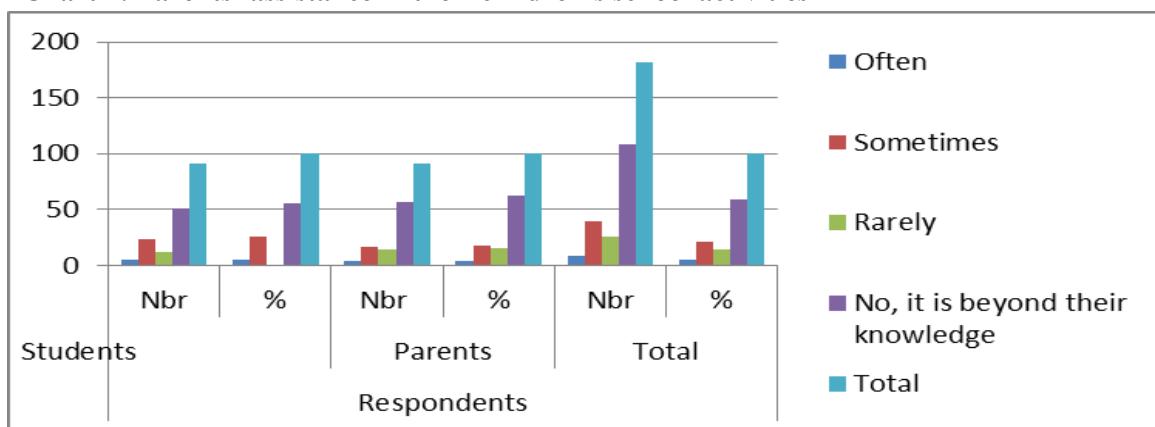
activities at home? It also presents findings got after asking the same question to the parents in this way “Do you remind your children to do school activities at home?

Chart 3: parents' initiatives in reminding their children to do school activities

Source: primary data, November 2012

This chart above reveals that a great majority of parents rarely remind their children to do school activities. This is confirmed with 103 of the total number of both questioned parents and students corresponding to 56.5%. They state that parents rarely take initiative to remind their children to do school activities. 57 corresponding to 31.3% confirm that parent sometimes do so while 20 corresponding to 11% confirm that parents do so often. Moreover, 2 respondents corresponding to 1.1% confirm that parents never take initiative to remind their children to do school activities.

3.3. Parents' inadequate assistance to their children's school activities

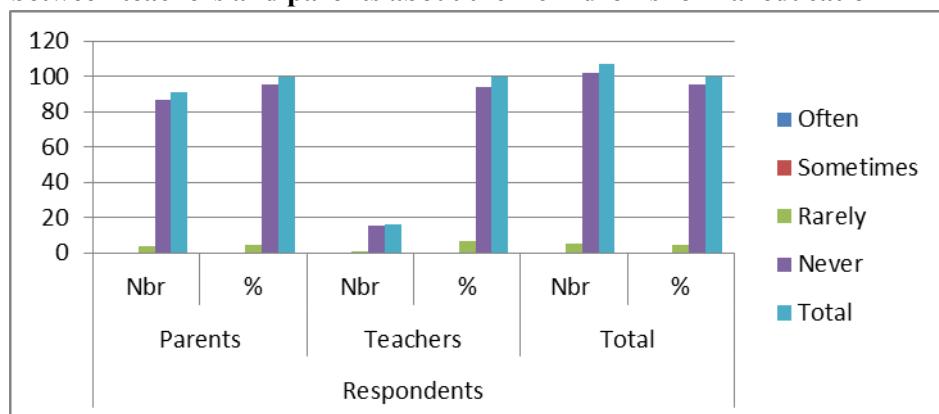
It is obvious that day students only have their parents to assist them in their school activities while they are at home. In order to get information on the way parents assist their children in school activities at home, the researcher asked to students the following question “Do your parents assist you in school activities? The researcher also asked to parents the same question as follow “Do you help your children in school activities?

Chart 4: Parents' assistance in their children's school activities

Source: primary data, November 2012

From the chart above, 51 students corresponding to 56% of the questioned students and 57 parents corresponding to 62.6% of the questioned parents responded that parents do not assist their children in school activities. These respondents provide the reason that they do so because they do not have knowledge to help their children in any kind of school activities. They had not gone beyond primary school level. Moreover 23 students corresponding to 25.3% of questioned students and 16 parents corresponding to 17.6% of questioned parents responded that parents give their assistance sometimes. 12 students corresponding to 13.2% of the

questioned students and 14 parents corresponding to 15.4% of the questioned parents responded that parents do it rarely. Only 5 students corresponding to 5.5% of questioned students and 4 parents corresponding to 4.4% of questioned parents confirm that parents often give their assistance.

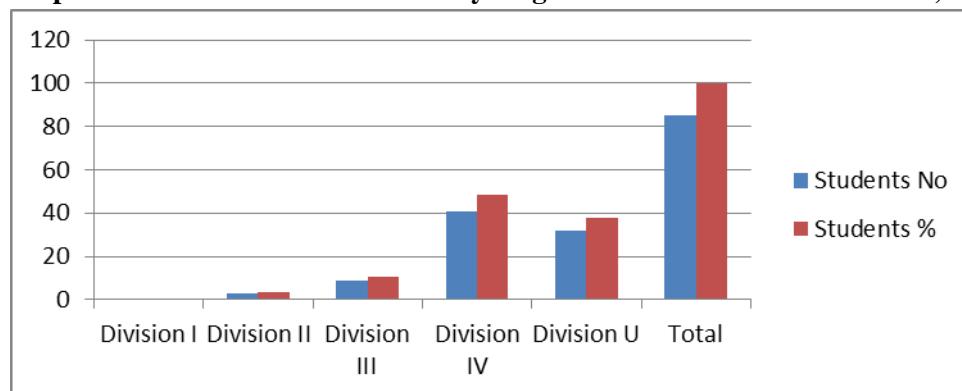
Chart 5: Talks between teachers and parents about their children's formal education



Source: primary data, November 2012

The talks between teachers and parents about their children's formal education rarely take place. The information from the chart above shows that 102 respondents corresponding to 95.3% of all respondents confirm that no parents visit any teachers for the purpose of knowing the advancement of their children in formal education. Only 5 respondents corresponding to 4.7% of respondents state that few parents have talks with teachers. Out of this issue the researcher noticed through observation that parents do not even know those teachers. The only circumstances which usually make parents have talks with teachers are the indiscipline cases because most of the time parents whose children alleged to be indiscipline are compelled to report to the school administration. The probable reason of lack of visits and talks between teachers and parents partially depends on the fact that parents feel inadequate in a school setting. Parents may also feel uneasy if their cultural style or socioeconomic levels differ from those of teachers (Greenberg, 1989).

Chart 6: Level of performance of students of G S Cyabagarura in national examinations, 2011



This chart shows how the students performed in national exams where five divisions of performance were clearly indicated to make things vivid about the problem being investigated.

4. DISCUSSION

This work entitled "Investigation into parents' participation in their children's formal education" aims at highlighting the gaps in Cyabagarura parents' participation in the schooling of their children, identifying the impact of parents' poor participation in the formal education of their children on performance and contributing to the improvement of parent participation in schooling. In the same way the work was guided by the following research questions: (1) how do parents whose children study at G. S Cyabagarura participate in the schooling of their children? (2) What are the impacts of parents' participation gaps on performance at G.S Cyabagarura?

As provisional responses to these research questions, the researcher has hypothesized as follow: (1) the parents whose children study at G.S Cyabagarura participate poorly in the schooling of their children, (2) the students of G.S Cyabagarura perform poorly in examination and it is partially due to the poor participation of their parents in formal education.

As far as research methodology is concerned, the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative methods while analyzing and interpreting data. The sample was drawn from O-level students of G.S Cyabagarura, their parents and all their teachers. In order to get this sample, the researcher used the stratified systematic random sampling technique. In addition, the researcher used the interview guide questionnaires, documentation and observation as instruments of data collection.

As it is known or stated by different scholars where they often state “Strengthening the quality of education is not a single issue. Many factors need to be involved such as school, teacher, student, parent, and other relevant parties. Importantly, it needs a very strong commitment of involvement from those parties to make it happen” which sounds different from the following results. Based on the collected data, our research findings have shown that parents’ participation in their children’s formal education presents gaps in variety of areas of parents’ responsibilities as described in the data analysis section. These areas include among others: (1) the time parent devote to their children’s formal education as evidenced by 84.6% of all respondents who confirm that parents are sometimes available at home. (2) Initiatives of parents to remind their children to do school activities as evidenced by 56.1% of all respondents who confirm that parents rarely take initiative to remind their children to do school activities. (3) Parents’ assistance in their children’s schooling as evidenced by 59.4% of all respondents who confirm that parents do not assist their children in school activities because these activities are beyond their knowledge. (4) Frequencies of visits parents pay to their children at school as evidenced by 62.6% of all respondents who confirm that parents never visit their children at school. (5) Talks between parents and teachers of their children about the formal education of their children as evidenced by 95.3% of all respondents who state that parents never visit teachers for the purpose of knowing the advancement of their children. (6) Responsiveness of parents to the school invitation as evidenced by 47.2% of all questioned parents who confirm that they did not attend to any PTA meetings among the three last meetings. (7) The last not least is strategies of motivating their children in formal education as evidenced by 26.9% of all respondents who state that parents never care about both high and poor grades. Furthermore, the above findings prove and validate the first hypothesis that parents whose children study at G.S Cyabagarura participate poorly in the schooling of their children. Therefore, the above findings show that parents do not effectively assist their children. The probable reason here is as stated by Brown (1989) that some parents who are uninvolved in their children’s school activity at home may not understand the importance of parent involvement or may think they do not have the skills to be able to help. With the help of information provided by parents and students and how some parents in this study showed a lack of motivation to help their children to value education and keep it up in their daily school activities, we have associated the poor performance of students to their parents’ low interest in their children education.

The findings of the present research have also revealed the level of performance of the students at G.S Cyabagarura. 38.5% of students get marks that are less than the half in summative assessments. In addition, only 4 students among 85 students who completed the O-level in 2011 were sent to school of excellence. This implies that students perform poorly at G.S Cyabagarura. According to Waterford.org, an organization seeking to help children succeed through access to lifelong education, the participation of parents in the educational process means that teachers and parents share the responsibility to teach students and work together to achieve educational goals that leads to the fruitful performance. Unlike to the data from the informants and Waterford, the above data displays much to us how much parents are less concerned to their children’s learning when they are at home or at school. Thus, the second hypothesis confirms that the parents’ poor participation brings about the poor performance of students.

This study has some strength, including the use of mixed method design that enabled us to explore in depth our investigation of the parents’ participation in their children education and the observation helped us to see students and teacher classroom interactions which often indicated students who came from home without

reading their notes and doing the assigned classroom activities. The gaps of parents' participation be at home and at school have been observed through all tools of data collection used in this research. Though the study was done well, we cannot forget some limitations encountered how in the interview and questionnaire some parents due to their educational background wrote their answers in Kinyarwanda language which took time the researchers to translate them in English language despite the fact that the questions were typed in both English and the mother tongue (Kinyarwanda) of the respondents to facilitate them give authentic and comprehensive information.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research conducted from GS Cyabagarura revealed the fact that the parents do not get time to encourage their children to study and do the school activities assigned to them. As you all know, students who study in 9YBE are called day students because their schools do not accommodate them at all due to the government policy. Thus, parents have been identified in this research for not taking their responsibilities of reminding their children to revise their courses when they arrived at home where the study discovered some parents who gave a lot of house work to accomplish rather than pushing them to study after classes. Without any reservations whatsoever, the findings from the data collected from students and their parents as well as school teachers exposed the parents' poor participation in their children formal education as the result of poor performance for these children due to the fact that parents are less responsible for their children education be at home or at school where the study discovered that some parents did not visit their children at school to ask and know the progress and performance of their children. Based on this research, parents and teachers are advised to work hand in hand for raising the students' learning motivation and performance. For the parents whose children return home after the class, they are also recommended to give much time to their children to revise their lessons and do the homework assigned by their teachers. The government should propose efficient measures and policy which can remind all the stakeholders who are supposed to implement the program of nine and twelve years basic education such that the children who underwent that program should not be considered weak after the release of summative exam or national exams.

Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. The co-author has seen and agreed with the contents of the manuscript and there is no financial interest to report. We certify that the submission is original work and is not under review at any other publication.

Author's Profile

Jean Damascene Ngendahayo was born in Rwanda. He is currently a Language Center Coordinator and Assistant Lecturer in the faculty of Education at Institut d'Enseignement Supérieur de Ruhengeri (INES-Ruhengeri) in Rwanda since February 2019. Prior to his recent appointment at the above mentioned institution, he was a part-time lecturer at Christian University of Rwanda at Kigali and Kibogora Polytechnic located in the Western of Rwanda from 2017 to 2019. He also combined this visiting with his permanent teaching in public secondary schools in Rwanda. He received his Master's degree of Arts in English Language and Literature Education (**MA ED**) from Kampala University, Uganda in March 2016 and also obtained a Master of Theology (**MTh**) by International Christian University (ICU), USA in January 2019 where he got an excellent grade and was therefore awarded the doctorate scholarship by ICU founder and he is now pursuing his Theology Doctorate (**DTh**) in the same university. He published some papers in preferred Journals and participated in some academic discussions and conferences. His areas of interests include education, linguistics, English language and literature as well as Theology. He has 3 years of research and teaching experience of more than 10 years in the areas of English language, Literature, communication skills in English and French as well as Kiswahili language.

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